ONE WOMAN'S WAY

By JULIA FRASER 1865-1949

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NEZ PERCES IN ATTENDANCE ON PRESBYTERY AT GARFIELD, IDAHO, 1910
The women were delegates at the presbyterial meeting. Miss McBeth is at the left of the group

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ADULT men, calm and well poised, are grouped around a substantial table, piled high with papers and well worn books. A keen, blue-eyed woman, with energy and activity revealed by countless gestures, is seated at the head of the table, reading aloud in soft and evenly modulated tones from the open book before her. The clearly enunciated words are strange and unfamiliar to you, seated cosily in the distant corner of the huge room and quite hidden from general view by high backed chairs. Now she is gravely interrupted by a round, deep voice; in the same unfamiliar tongue (unmistakably neither Latin nor Teutonic), a question is asked and before very long an argument, evidently of keenest interest to all, has begun.

MISS KATE MCBETH

What are they talking about? What is the language? Who are the dignified, dark-eyed men? And above all who is the woman of dominating personality—the controlling center of this animated group? You said something about Indians? But surely these well dressed, gentlemanly appearing men are not Indians, the language their language, and this woman their teacher? Yea, verily, the Nez Perce Indian preachers are gathered around Kate Christine McBeth, their theological teacher, and she is leading them in the discussion of a knotty doctrinal problem.

Evidently remembering her promise to translate an occasional point, so that you would understand a little, at least, of the lecture, she is now speaking in English and you appreciate a fine, clear-cut definition and realize the thoroughness of the training in this most unique theological seminary where all instruction is given by this one woman.

Not only are the leading Indians of Idaho, the Nez Perces, taught, but truth seekers from other tribes are welcome. In this particular group are two strangers from the far away Shoshones, whom James Hayes, the modern apostle to the red men, brought back with him from his last evangelistic visit to that tribe, formerly bitter enemies, but now made friends and brought nigh by the blood of Jesus Christ. So progresses the work—so deepens the influence even as ever widening circles are made by a wee pebble thrown into the still surface of a quiet lake. Such was the training of the

Rev. Mark Arthur and family. His son Daniel and Rachel, his wife, holding the children.

McBeth sisters and such is it now by their devoted nieces, the Crawford girls, who both have learned wisdom through service with their heroic aunts.

II

One wondered when Miss Kate McBeth slept. She was always up before the sun. Especially in summer time, did this mean very early rising, and a long uninterrupted morning of theological study, for teacher and pupils were grouped around their work-table before seven o'clock. Afternoons, their wives came. Wives? Yes, the McBeth sisters admitted to their classes only mature men, insisted that they should be married and bring their families with them when studying theology. The special training for the women and children thus raised the standard of the entire family.

O wise, far-sighted leaders were the McBeth sisters! Many simple plans formulated by them and worked out in the hard school of experience now bear high-sounding titles, often carrying honorary degrees!

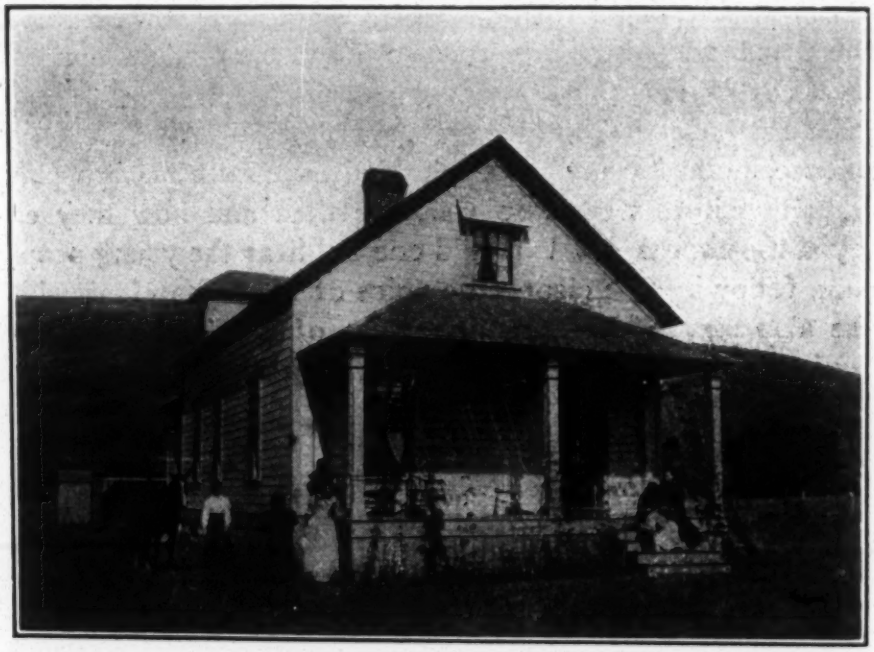
The women and children were taught the Bible, domestic science, domestic art, first aid, and especially how to play. Indian visitors were also welcome then and how they enjoyed the chorus drill! Could one but hear the young people sing, following the clear, true voice of Miss Crawford while she also played the accompaniment of the little old organ (quite recently replaced by her own piano, which is generously used for all mission work), then indeed one knew it to be true, as Miss Sue McBeth would often say, "the Nez Perces have been fairly sung into the Gospel."

III

In the cool of the evening, when the day's work was done and the glory of the setting sun had thrown riotous colors in the sky, when the smooth, treeless hills encircling the

valley were glowing in royal purples and crimsons, was the time to entice Miss Kate out of doors, seat her comfortably in her big, old-fashioned rocking chair on the bit of green grass and wait for the flood of tribal lore and history, for she was a prince of story tellers. The grass was green only because of constant irrigation, for here, as in all the vast Inland Empire, grass is no synonym for green, but rather for the soft melting browns, russets and clear yellows of the western ranges. Heavy perfume of blossoming honeysuckles, evening songs of wild birds, the one, clear call of an occasional meadow lark are inseparably associated with Kate McBeth's stories.

Sometimes she would tell how her dear comrade, Alice Fletcher, interested her friend, Mrs. William Thaw, to build the house, which for the last twenty-two years of her



MISS MCBETH'S HOME

life was both home and workshop; or of the comfort of the Rondthaler cottage, on the mission grounds scarcely five hundred yards away, where the Indian preachers lived when attending her classes; or of the work carried on in those buildings across the road a little distance south—the great Government Sanitorium for tubercular children from all Indian tribes.

Indian myths, legends and customs would often be sympathetically pictured. The early history of the Nez Perces, including stories of the lasting impressions made upon them by the visits of Lewis and Clark and their negro servant, of Sacajewea, Watkuese, of the going out to St. Louis of the four Nez Perces in search of the "White Man's Guide to Heaven," of the sad return of the only survivor of that memorable expedition; of the coming to Lapwai of Spalding and Gray with their devoted wives and the marvelous work they accomplished in eleven short years; of the massacre of the Whitmans, away to the westward of the Nez Perce country, the general unrest it caused among Indians of the far Northwest, necessitating the withdrawal of all missionaries for nearly twenty-five years—these stories and many others, in marvelously colored detail, I have had from Miss Kate.

Sometimes the theme would be the old home in Ohio, where, in 1832, she was born; or the sturdy Scotch parents; the early and careful Bible instruction; the thrift, energy and good practical common sense which made possible the best education the times afforded for each of the four daughters and the one only and dearly beloved son; or her experiences as a teacher in various schools—how the bad boys were always put in her class and how they soon became her devoted friends.

Again the scene would be Idaho and she would glow with excitement, while describing the separation of Christians

from heathen, for the Fourth of July camp meeting, the wonderful growth of the Christian camp meetings and the six Indian Churches, which have developed since that drastic measure was adopted. Descriptions of her political training of the men and women (for in Idaho all women vote) and the thrilling experiences in prohibition elections would make her eyes snap; they would fairly dance as she told of the editorial in a "wet paper" which gravely announced that "the last election was lost because of the votes of the women and Indians."

But the theme Miss Kate loved most was her Sister Sue, who, she always claimed, originated the plan of concentrating special training on a few selected young Indian men, making them leaders among their own people. Often would Miss Kate describe the physical hardships of her sister's journey to Idaho in the pioneer days of 1872. Miss Sue's ability, rare unselfishness and deep consecration were rich themes for the devoted younger sister to expand. I have

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always believed her love for Miss Sue was the controlling power which made Miss Kate willing to prepare her rare book, "The Nez Perces Since Lewis and Clark." Writing was for her most irksome and she was far too impatient, temperamentally, for such a task, except as her love for her sister sweetened this sacrifice and made it not only possible but a deep joy.

After Miss Sue's death (1893), Miss Kate succeeded her as theological instructor while her niece, Mazie Crawford, did among the women and children the work which had been hers. Miss Crawford is now the theological professor and her younger sister, Elizabeth, works with the women and children.

Miss Kate spent thirty-six years among the Nez Perces, most of the time in the Lapwai Valley, though Kamiah and Mt. Idaho afforded fleeting homes. She was over forty-five years of age when she came West and learned to speak fluently the Nez Perces language.

IV

The first time I met Miss Kate McBeth was when my father and I were making one of our frequent visits in the hospitable home of the late William S. Ladd in Portland. A little later the first meeting of General Assembly in the far West caused this beautiful home to be thrown open to many invited guests, including Miss McBeth and Mrs. A. R. McFarland of Alaska. One morning Mr. Ladd smilingly bade me to "look sharp after Miss McBeth and Mrs. McFarland, try to keep them out of mischief, and see that they miss nothing worth while in Assembly," which instruction I literally obeyed! When Miss Kate learned that my Sunday school teacher was an old childhood friend of hers, Mr. A. J. Ralston, she responded most graciously to my lavish at-

tentions. Thus began a precious friendship, which I always jealously treasured.

Her marked ability and deep loyalty, keen appreciation of humor, sterling sense of honor and sincerity, childlike faith in her Savior are unforgettable characteristics. It is refreshing and stimulating to think about her. Of great physical endurance and unusual vigor, her long life was remarkably free from serious illness.

She attended the meeting of the Presbytery of Walla Walla at Clarkston the last of September, 1915. After her return home, she frequently complained of being weary. A stroke of paralysis affected one side. Carefully attended by her niece, Mazie Crawford, a trained nurse and her friend and dearly beloved physician, Dr. Ally, without any suffering or pain she gently slipped away, October 29, 1915.

It is sweet to remember that the last visitor to sit quietly by her bed was Mrs. John Frank, youngest daughter of her trusted old Indian Elder, Billy Williams, who was nephew of one of the four who, in 1832, went in search of the "White Man's Guide to Heaven."

A deeply solemn service was held in the Spalding Church the following morning, and that afternoon by train the last journey was made to her beloved Kamiah, for long ago she had requested to be buried there by the side of her sister.

Of the Kamiah service, Mrs. John F. Pingry, in the Home Mission Monthly wrote: "There were no bright colored shawls or handkerchiefs to be seen on the people who crowded the little church. Men and women alike were not ashamed to show their grief at the loss of their beloved friend and leader. Men whom she had trained for the ministry took charge of the services and with broken voices spoke words of comfort and triumph. At the memorial service, Rev. Mark Arthur, the first of her students to be ordained, preached a sermon from Acts 9:30-39. Referring

to the coats and garments which Dorcas had made, deeply moved, he said: 'To-day we have something better than coats and garments to show for the work of our Miss Kate McBeth, for I see before me redeemed souls won to Christ through her gentle ministry.'

"There will be long mourning in the homes of the Nez Perces because the friend, the tireless worker, who for thirty-six years had gone in and out before them will be with them no more; but the spirit will be there, and her influence will be felt in every home where prayer is offered, in every struggle for uplift, in the church, the Sunday school, the church society, and in every Nez Perce gathering that makes for righteousness, for 'the teachers that are wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.'"

JULIA FRASER.

Oakland, California,
June 18, 1917.

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